

GRAND JUNCTION RESOURCE AREA
SHORT FORM ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA Number CO-076.3-48

Case File No. COC-50893

Applicant: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), for the Walker Field, Colorado, Public Airport Authority (Airport Authority)

PART 1, INTRODUCTION

A. Type of Action: Withdrawal of public lands from location and entry under the mining laws, and amendment to the Grand Junction Resource Area Resource Management Plan, 1987 (RMP).

B. Location of Proposed Action (The lands are depicted on the attached map):

Ute Principal Meridian

T. 1 N., R. 1 E., Sec. 19: Lots 1-4, E $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 20: S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 29: N $\frac{1}{2}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 30: Lot 1, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 32: NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$.
T. 1 N., R. 1 W., Sec. 13: N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 14: SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 23: NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 24: NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$.

containing approximately 2,163 acres.

C. Need for Proposed Action: The proposed mineral withdrawal is needed to protect public lands lying immediately north of the Walker Field Airport from incompatible uses that could jeopardize the viability of the Airport. Based on aviation activity projections, a parallel runway is expected to be needed within the next 20 to 30 years in order to accommodate projected aviation demand. The proposed withdrawal would protect the above described lands from mining claims and operations that would be inconsistent with present or future Airport operations and expansion needs.

Background:

On December 21, 1987, the Airport Authority applied through the FAA for transfer of these lands adjacent to the Walker Field Airport for additional airport development and to provide a compatible buffer around the Airport. Construction of a parallel runway was estimated to occur some 20 or 30 years in the future.

On October 29, 1990, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) denied the request for transfer based on a statement by the Airport Authority that construction of the runway was not a definite proposal at that time. It was BLM's determination that the proposed uses of the lands, excluding actual runway construction, were consistent with continued BLM management, and that transfer of the lands would not be in the national interest. BLM case file COC-46909 contains detailed information on the conveyance application.

On July 18, 1991, the Airport Authority and BLM entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to protect the lands from discretionary actions by the BLM until construction of a parallel runway becomes necessary and the lands are determined to be suitable for conveyance to the Airport Authority. Withdrawal of public lands from mineral location and entry is not a discretionary action. The authority to make, modify, extend, or revoke withdrawals lies with the Secretary of the Department of Interior.

D. Conformance with RMP and Other Applicable Plans and Policies: I have reviewed the RMP and other applicable plans for the project area. The Proposed Action was not addressed in the RMP and therefore an amendment to the RMP is required before the withdrawal can be approved.

PART 2, DESCRIPTION

A. Proposed Action:

The FAA, which is the federal agency responsible for supervising and administering the aviation and airport system, has filed an application under Section 204 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (90 Stat. 2751, 43 U.S.C. 1714) to withdraw approximately 2,163 acres of public land, adjacent to the Walker Field Airport, from locatable mineral entry. The Walker Field Airport is a key component of Colorado's intrastate aviation system, as well as the nation's interstate aviation system.

The FAA has determined that the Airport Authority will eventually require conveyance of the subject lands, from BLM to the Airport Authority, to accommodate the Walker Field Airport's long term expansion needs. The proposed withdrawal would ensure that the lands would not be encumbered by mining claims at that time. The withdrawal would also protect the lands from locatable mineral development that would be inconsistent with present or future Airport operations. If the proposed withdrawal is approved, the lands will remain open to management by the BLM. This withdrawal would not allow any change in land use.

The withdrawal would be in effect for a period of twenty years, or until the lands are conveyed to the Airport Authority upon a determination by BLM that the lands are suitable for conveyance, if the property is required for Airport expansion purposes prior to the withdrawal termination date. At the end of the twenty year withdrawal term, the Airport Authority and BLM would review the withdrawal to determine whether or not the purpose for which the withdrawal was originally made is still valid. If the withdrawal is still necessary, it would be extended for another twenty years.

Before the withdrawal can be processed, the Grand Junction RMP must be amended to address the withdrawal. The amendment would result in changes to two RMP decisions as follows:

1. Chapter 2, Page 2-6, Locatable Minerals Management, Planned Management Actions, Table 4: Add "Potential Airport Expansion, 2,163 acres" under "Other areas," and change other affected acreages in Table 4 to reflect this change.
2. Chapter 2, Page 2-45, Emphasis Area F, Emphasis on Water, Locatable Minerals: Replace the sentence, "Open the entire area to mineral location except for those areas closed because of existing withdrawals," with "Close areas previously withdrawn from the mining laws, and potential Airport Expansion area (approximately 2,163 acres) to mineral location. Open the remaining area to mineral location."

A Notice of Intent to consider amendment of the RMP to address the proposed withdrawal was published in the Federal Register on December 17, 1992, and was also aired on a local news station. No comments were received on the Notice.

B. No Action:

Under the No Action alternative the above described public lands would continue to be open to mineral location and entry. The Grand Junction RMP would not be amended.

PART 3, AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. General Setting:

1. Land Status and Use: Both the surface and mineral estates of these lands are owned by the United States and are presently administered by the BLM. The Master Title and Oil and Gas Plats indicate the following land use authorizations in the area:

- COC-0101347 - flood control structure
- COC-0102696 - water pipeline and storage facilities
- COC-061164 - power line
- COC-13665 - oil and gas lease
- COC-26316 - access road
- COC-29800 - oil and gas lease
- COC-30010 - water pipeline and storage tank site
- COC-40283 - U.S. Army training site
- COC-43074 - natural gas pipeline
- COC-46266 - oil and gas lease

The proposed withdrawal area is also heavily used by recreationists and includes part of the Grand Valley Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) area which is a 17 square mile expanse of desert that has been designated for recreational use by all types of vehicles. This area is used by motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, 4X4's, mountain bikes, etc. All of the proposed withdrawal area, except for the N $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 13, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 14, and NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 23, T. 1 N., R. 1 W., lies within a designated no target shooting zone. The area is permitted for livestock grazing, and would also remain open to oil and gas leasing.

The proposed mineral withdrawal would not conflict with any of the existing uses.

According to the Mining Claim Geographical Index there are no mining claims of record in the area. The lands were partly encumbered by five mining claims as of 1991, but the claimants failed to timely file affidavits of labor for the 1991 assessment year, rendering the claims abandoned and void. A two-year segregation period began on July 5, 1991, the date the Notice of the proposed withdrawal was published in the Federal Register soliciting comments on the proposal. No comments were received. The Mineral Report completed by the Grand Junction Resource Area Mining Engineer on November 20, 1992, concludes with a high degree of certainty that the geologic formations on and beneath the subject lands lack any known locatable mineral resource (the Mineral Report is located in BLM case file COC-50893).

2. Location and Identification: The subject lands are located approximately four miles north of the city of Grand Junction, Colorado. The area was identified by means of the Corcoran Point, Round Mountain, and Clifton 7.5 minute USGS quadrangle maps.

3. Physical Description: The proposed withdrawal area consists mainly of Badlands which are severely eroded, mostly barren desert lands. Deep gullies and canyons separate rolling to very steep hills and ridges. Badland consists of gypsiferous shale, and Chipeta and Persayo soils. Vegetation is sparse including saltbush and some grass. Badlands are described as scenic and are used as a place of refuge by wildlife.

B. Critical Elements Review:

<u>Critical Element</u>	<u>Present</u>		<u>Affected</u>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Air Quality	X	—	—	X
ACECs	—	X	—	X
Cultural Resources	X	—	—	X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique	—	X	—	X
Floodplains	—	X	—	X
Native American Religious Concerns	—	X	—	X
Wilderness	—	X	—	X
T&E Species	X	—	—	X
Wastes, Hazardous/Solid	X	—	—	X
Water Quality	—	X	—	X
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	—	X	—	X
Wild & Scenic Rivers	—	X	—	X

Air Quality - The air quality of the area is PSD Class II. The Proposed Action would not have an impact on air quality. Cultural Resources - Of the archaeological inventories that have been conducted in the general area, the only site that has been identified is the old railroad grade for the Little Book Cliffs Railroad. The mineral withdrawal would not affect cultural resources, therefore a cultural resources inventory for this proposal is not required. T&E Species - Bald Eagles, which are listed as endangered, are known to occur in the area but would not be affected by the mineral withdrawal. Solid Waste - Mesa County held a Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) lease for a sanitary landfill (Book Cliff landfill) on a portion of the subject lands from 1975 to 1984 (Lease No. COC-18469). The R&PP lease was located in SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 13, T. 1 N., R. 1 W. The landfill was operated from 1975 to 1978 for disposal of household waste. The landfill was then closed and the lease was cancelled in 1984. A Preliminary Assessment (PA) of the Bookcliff Landfill was completed by BLM and approved by the EPA on Sept. 14, 1992. The PA addressed the potential for the presence of hazardous materials/wastes, possible migration routes of contaminants, and possible future actions. EPA determined that the landfill site should be classified as Site Evaluation Accomplished and that a Site Investigation was not necessary and that EPA will not investigate this site further for inclusion on the National Priorities List. No negative impacts would result from the existence of solid waste.

C. Description of Impacts:

1. Proposed Action: The proposed action would not have adverse impacts on any critical elements or resources.

Locatable Minerals - The mineral report concludes that the subject lands lack any known locatable mineral resource. Therefore, the proposed withdrawal would not have an impact on locatable minerals.

Socioeconomics - The proposed mineral withdrawal would have a positive impact on socioeconomics by protecting lands adjacent to the Walker Field Airport in an effort to allow the Airport Authority to better serve Colorado's intrastate and the Nation's interstate aviation systems. Granting of the withdrawal would also alleviate condemnation costs to the FAA or the Airport Authority when the land is needed for Airport expansion.

2. No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, the subject lands would be open to the operation of the mining laws. The existence of mining claims or mining operations on these lands would be incompatible with Walker Field Airport operations and future airport plans. Costs to the Airport Authority under this alternative could be exorbitant.

D. Description of Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts: None.

PART 4, CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. Persons/Agencies Consulted:

Harry Griff, AttorneyWalker Field AirportFederal Aviation Administration

B. Reviewers:

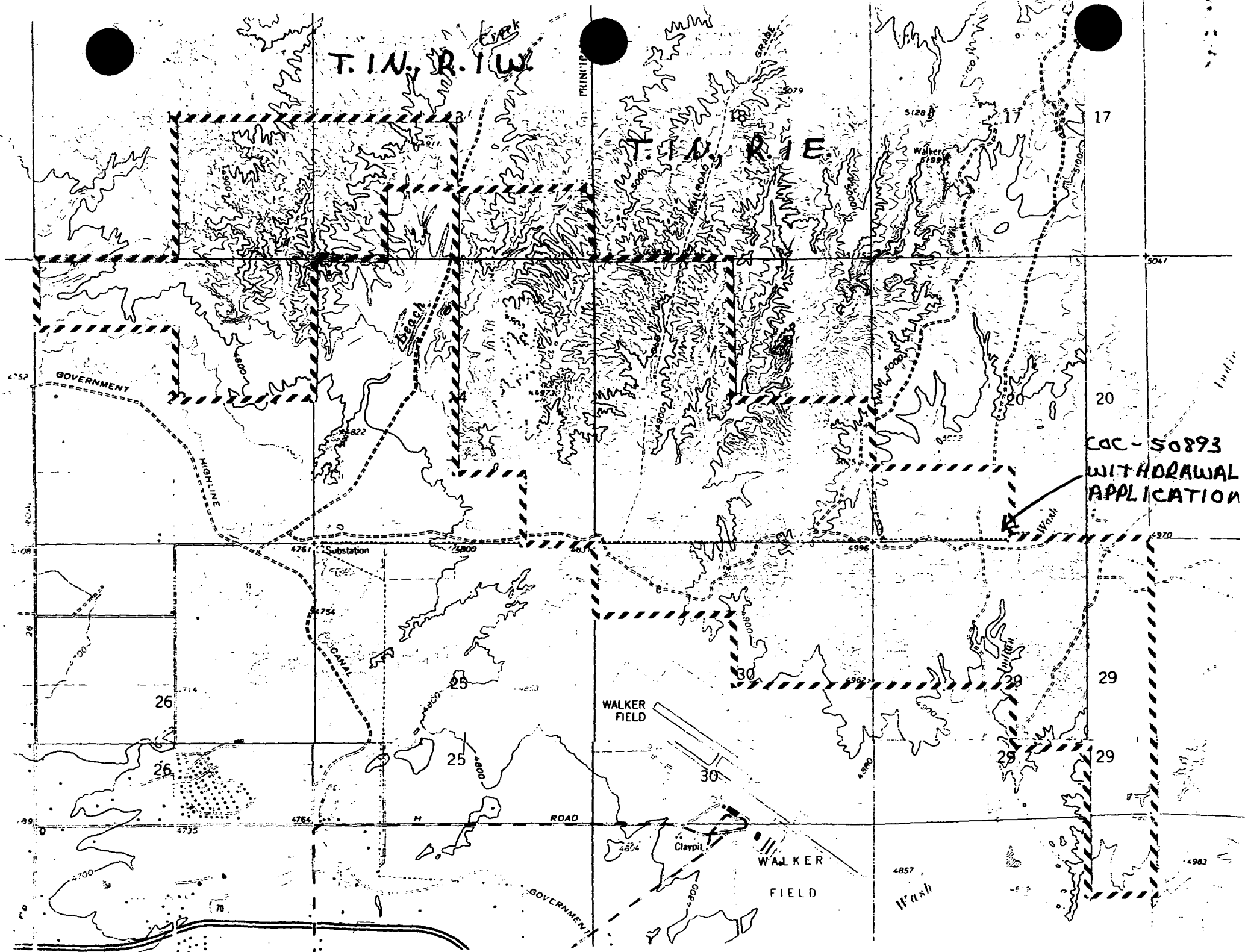
<u>Ed Ginouves</u> Ed Ginouves	<u>Minerals</u>	<u>6/29/93</u> Date
<u>Michael Piontkowski</u> Michael Piontkowski	<u>Cultural Resources</u>	<u>5/5/93</u> Date
<u>Ron Lambeth</u> Ron Lambeth	<u>Wildlife Management</u>	<u>5-5-93</u> Date
<u>Brian Hopkins</u> Brian Hopkins	<u>Outdoor Recreation</u>	<u>5-4-93</u> Date
<u>Jim Dollerschell</u> Jim Dollerschell	<u>Range Management</u>	<u>5-6-93</u> Date
<u>Will Lambert</u> Will Lambert	<u>Oil and Gas</u>	<u>5/5/93</u> Date
<u>Dave Stevens</u> Dave Stevens	<u>Environmental Coordination</u>	<u>5-4-93</u> Date

C. Preparer:

<u>Robin Buchanan</u> Robin Buchanan	<u>Lands</u>	<u>4-16-93</u> Date
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PART 5, FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
GRAND JUNCTION DISTRICT OFFICE

DECISION RECORD

EA Number: CO-076-3-48 Project Name: Walker Field, Colorado, Public
Case File: COC-50893 Airport Authority Locatable Mineral
Withdrawal and RMP Amendment

Decision: Approve amendment of the Grand Junction Resource Management Plan 1987 (RMP) to address the proposed Walker Field, Colorado, Public Airport Authority Mineral Withdrawal, and approve withdrawal of the public lands described below from locatable mineral entry as proposed by the Federal Aviation Administration for the Walker Field, Colorado, Public Airport Authority:

Ute Principal Meridian

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containing approximately 2,163 acres.

The following changes will be made to two RMP decisions:

1. Chapter 2, Page 2-6, Locatable Minerals Management, Planned Management Actions, Table 4: Add "Potential Airport Expansion, 2,163 acres" under "Other areas," and change other affected acreages in Table 4 to reflect this change.
2. Chapter 2, Page 2-45, Emphasis Area F, Emphasis on Water, Locatable Minerals: Replace the sentence, "open the entire area to mineral location except for those areas closed because of existing withdrawals," with "Close areas previously withdrawn from the mining laws, and potential Airport Expansion area (approximately 2,163 acres) to mineral location. Open the remaining area to mineral location."

Rationale: This decision allows the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to proceed with the proposed Walker Field Airport locatable mineral withdrawal in which approximately 2,163 acres of public land lying immediately north of the Walker Field Airport will be protected from incompatible uses that could jeopardize the viability of the Airport.

The Walker Field Airport is a key component of Colorado's intrastate aviation system, as well as the nation's interstate aviation system. The Federal Aviation Administration has determined that the Walker Field Airport Authority will eventually require conveyance of the subject lands, from BLM to the Airport Authority, to accommodate Walker Field Airport's long term expansion needs. The mineral withdrawal will ensure that these lands will not be encumbered by mining claims at that time. The withdrawal will also protect the lands from locatable mineral development that would be inconsistent with present or future Airport operations.

The subject lands will remain open to management by the BLM. This withdrawal does not allow any change in land use.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared to analyze the effects of the proposed RMP amendment and locatable mineral withdrawal revealed no significant impacts to natural resources, other authorized land uses in the area, or socioeconomics. This withdrawal will have a positive impact on socioeconomics by allowing the Walker Field Airport Authority to better serve Colorado's intrastate and the Nations's interstate aviation systems. Condemnation costs to the FAA or the Airport Authority will also be alleviated when the land is needed for Airport expansion. In addition, there were no protests or objections received during the environmental analysis of the proposed action from any interested parties or the general public.

The No Action Alternative would result in the lands remaining open to the operation of the mining laws. The existence of mining claims or mining operations on these lands would be incompatible with Airport operations and future Airport plans.

Recommended by:

Catherine Robertson
Area Manager

11/29/93
Date

Recommended by:

Timothy C. Leitzell
District Manager

11/29/1993
Date

Approved by:

Bob Moore
State Director

12/3/93
Date